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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FOURTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 24 September 1990, at 10 a.m.

President:	Mr. de MARCO	(Malta)
later:	Mr. THOMPSON (Vice-President)	(Fiji)
later:	Mr. de MARCO	(Malta)

- Address by Mr. Fernando Collor, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil
- Address by Mr. François Mitterrand, President of the French Republic
- Opening of the general debate [9]

Statements made by:

Mr. Hannibalsson (Iceland)
Mrs. de St. Jorre (Seychelles)
Mr. Skubiszewski (Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

ADDRESS BY MR. FERNANDO COLLOR, PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Mr. Fernando Collor, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Mr. Fernando Collor, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President COLLOR (spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation): Mr. President, please accept my congratulations on your election. Your talents will ensure that the Assembly's work is conducted in a fair and efficient manner.

I wish also to convey to your predecessor our appreciation of the important tasks he accomplished.

May I also assure the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, that Brazil has been following, and supports, the diplomatic activity he has undertaken in the discharge of his functions. We recognize in him a dynamic Secretary-General dedicated to the lofty purposes of the United Nations.

A few days ago, Liechtenstein was admitted as a new Member State. On behalf of Brazil I extend my welcome to Liechtenstein and wish it every success at the United Nations.

I am addressing the General Assembly for the first time. I note with emotion that the general debate is opening precisely at a time when many and profound changes in Brazil and throughout the world are bringing about a revision of concepts and misconceptions that for decades have asphyxiated the community of nations. I wish to convey to the Assembly the views of the people of Brazil and

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their new Government on the prospects for peace, freedom and progress throughout the world, and on the role to be played by this Organization in the years ahead.

I am convinced that the dawn of the new era we are striving to create will certainly shine forth from this privileged forum of reflection and analysis. The brilliance of that dawn will depend on our individual and collective endeavours towards world peace, the prosperity of nations and the growing solidarity among the peoples of the world.

(President Collor)

In the last 12 months a number of events have transformed the outlook of international relations, especially at the East-West level. Peoples who had been subjected to authoritarian régimes resolutely and definitively chose to follow the path of democracy. The end of the cold war represented the liquidation of a bitter legacy of disappointment, confrontation and risk to the very survival of humanity. The relaxation of international tensions has shed light upon the understanding of our common destiny, emphasizing the global nature of the relationship among peoples and between mankind and the environment.

New and promising trends have almost led us into euphoria and complacency. But the vulnerability of the international order, the destabilizing effect of certain regional crises and the seriousness of economic problems would warrant caution and reserve.

The crisis that has befallen Kuwait presents an unexpected and serious threat to collective peace. The Brazilian Government deems it essential that the mandatory resolutions adopted by the Security Council be immediately complied with.

These resolutions were adopted in response to the clamour of international public opinion. Their legal basis is found in the Charter. All parties involved must therefore abide by them, not as a sign of weakness but as an inescapable legal and political obligation. This seems to be the only just and peaceful means to restore tranquillity to the region and the world at large. It is our belief that all States are profoundly committed to peace and to the agile and effective use of diplomatic means to avoid conflict.

By immediately and fully complying with the resolutions, Member States have in turn unequivocally indicated that a breach of international legal order is intolerable in times when even conventional weapons have awesome destructive force and the international economy presents a network of complementary interests. They have also expressed their firm support for United Nations efforts in the region as a

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whole, where many a people deserving, as all others, of peace, security and prosperity have for so long been vexed by crises. Brazil is particularly concerned with the fate of the long-suffering Lebanese people, torn by internal strife, their sovereign capacity to decide their own destiny thwarted by the presence of foreign troops.

I reaffirm the determination of my Government fully to comply with Security Council resolution 661 (1990) within its domestic jurisdiction.

The decisions of the Council affect the economic interests of Member States quite differently; and Brazil, which, as is generally known, had been struggling with difficulties prior to the crisis, ranks among the countries outside the region that have been most adversely affected.

Closely attuned to the more positive trends of contemporary history, Brazil is undergoing a process of deep transformation which sets it irreversibly on the path towards full democracy, economic liberalization and social justice. Elected by my fellow citizens in the freest elections ever held in our history, I have taken upon myself crucial personal and political responsibilities before 150 million Brazilians. The mandate conferred upon me by the people is that of swiftly promoting modernization and fully integrating the country into the world economy in order to render it more competitive and so that its people may reach the levels of well-being to which their talents and industriousness entitle them.

It is my commitment to rehabilitate both the State and society, to guarantee fully functioning democratic institutions, to restructure and revitalize the economy, to defeat inflation, to unleash the creative forces of the private sector, and to fight the misery which still torments a portion of my people.

It is also my duty to protect the most vulnerable segments of society. This explains why I have given top priority to children and the young. Children, it has been repeatedly stated, embody the future, and this is particularly true in a

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country like Brazil, with a predominantly young population, which anxiously seeks modernization.

We are aware that our country faces dramatic problems in this respect. We make no secret of these problems nor of our resolve to solve them. The comprehensive initiatives we have launched on behalf of children indicate how seriously committed we are to converting Brazil's potential into a lasting reality.

I therefore welcome with enthusiasm the initiative for convening the World Summit for Children, with which Brazil associates itself and in which I intend to participate personally in an intensive and constructive manner.

As a result of important ongoing changes, deep-seated pessimism is vanishing and opposing views are in the process of being reconciled. Authoritarianism is doomed. Political and psychological attitudes based upon steady progress towards freedom, democracy and improved dialogue among nations are asserting themselves.

At this point no Government can avoid or be excluded from the debate on the prospects for a future world order. In Latin America we have reached, not without difficulty, an advanced stage of democratic evolution and respect for human rights, which constitute for us a source of pride and renewed encouragement.

In our region, as in others, men, women and above all the young have new energies and hopes. Once again Latin America was proved itself worthy of the dreams of emancipation of its peoples and is reconciled with its true democratic calling.

(President Collor)

In Africa remnants of the colonial past are crumbling at the same time that the last bastion of segregation and racism is finally beginning to break apart. Together with my fellow Brazilians I salute the independence of Namibia, a process which my country consistently supported, and we wish the young State the realization of its enormous potential. I also welcome the release of Nelson Mandela, which was enthusiastically applauded in Brazil, and I wish him every success in his courageous struggle.

The international community's agenda has become global in scope. The United Nations is faced with the task of establishing a new framework for peace and prosperity. It is no longer possible to conceive of a world chronically split into feuding halves. Neither ideology nor poverty can be allowed to come between human beings.

The trend towards globalization holds true for every quadrant of the world, East and West, North and South. The yearning for freedom, dignity and better living conditions knows no boundaries. New opportunities must not be missed lest we run the risk of replacing the obsolete East-West confrontation with the aggravation of the North-South crisis and of adding new mistakes that may jeopardize the future of international society.

The Brazilian Government is prepared to discuss the basic outline of a new international structure that can ensure peace and further co-operation. It would not suffice merely to preserve the current global political and economic arrangements and even less to repeat the past, recent or remote. The highly antiquated concept of power, as the capacity for destruction and as an expression of economic hegemony, should be finally abandoned. It is necessary to dismantle its practical apparatus. Thus, first, military alliances must undergo profound transformation in order to reflect the convergent and interdependent world we now

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live in. Secondly, partial negotiation on disarmament should be expanded in order to assume a general and complete scope, above all in the fields of nuclear and chemical weapons, in response to the expectations of the international community. Lastly, regional tensions must be thoroughly addressed in diplomatic and political terms in order that they may be eliminated as hotbeds of global instability.

Above all it is imperative to articulate a new concept of world power as a revolutionary capacity for invention, production and construction for the benefit of all nations and all peoples.

Peace is multifaceted and should translate at the international level the trends towards democracy, participation and representation. Democratization of the world order is a prerequisite for a peace that is both just and sound, free from any kind of threat. Peace must mean more than the abolition of conflicts, of threats and of the hegemonic preponderance of the most developed or most powerful. Thus, the major international institutions must reflect the new realities and be capable of accommodating the rapid and fruitful increase in contacts among States and the formation of multiple groupings.

This comprehensive concept of peace is illustrated by the new pace set for the process of dialogue and integration in South America. Day by day the understanding within Amazonian, Andean and Southern Cone groups of nations gains in substance. Outstanding among those efforts is the determination displayed by the Governments of Brazil and Argentina in establishing a common market before December 1994. The process of integration under way in the Southern Cone involves, in addition to Brazil and Argentina, the fraternal countries of Paraguay, Uruguay and Chile.

In Latin America a pioneering initiative of diplomatic co-ordination, the Group of Rio, grows stronger and has now attained political maturity. Our region is thus in a position to engage in a dialogue with the centres of the world economy,

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the United States, Western Europe and Japan, in order to explore new opportunities for economic exchange and co-operation. In that regard the economic initiative recently launched by the United States Government met with a positive reaction on the part of many Latin American countries. It will certainly be consolidated in the next few months.

In the South Atlantic the zone of peace and co-operation established by a resolution of the General Assembly gains in substance and, with the relaxation of international tensions, will encompass new elements of global interest, such as the protection and preservation of the marine environment. In this field our zone of peace and of co-operation may play an innovative role on a global scale, provided more committed financial and technological support is available.

Brazil ratified the Treaty of Tlatelolco and has reiterated in international forums its respect for its purposes and those of related international agreements. Recently Brazil and Argentina publicly announced that an intense exchange of views is taking place among interested parties on the implementation of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. That pioneering Latin American initiative in the field of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons preceded all other efforts, whether regional or universal in scope, devoted to the same objective. I believe, however, that the time has come to go one step further. Brazil today discards the idea of any experiments that might involve nuclear explosions, even if only for peaceful purposes. We trust other nations will consider the possibility of following the same path.

All changes that seek to consolidate freedom and democracy, to strengthen true peace and international security, to cast away old myths and to reconcile efficiency with justice are of interest to Brazil. Not every new development on the international scene, however, is forward looking. The structures of power have,

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in essence, not yet been altered. In fact one may even fear a reinforcement of the international stratification, both economic and political. This could include a biased discrimination hindering access to scientific and technological knowledge.

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Efforts towards disarmament are still incipient and their diplomatic handling has never been so remote from multilateral forums. Military incidents in different parts of the world demonstrate that many regional security problems have not yet been addressed. Racialist and xenophobic outbursts are unfortunately recurring in some quarters.

Nevertheless, we have not abandoned optimism. History shall not be rewritten. We think that, faced with the global challenges of modern life, humanity will march - despite present difficulties and obstacles - towards new, peaceful and productive forms of co-existence. The global structure shall allow for new strides in the pursuit of human happiness. We are not condemned to the twin threats of violence and political confrontation.

A promising agenda is being announced which includes, not only the revitalization of economic development and international co-operation, but also issues involving the observance of all human rights - political, economic and social - as well as concerted efforts to protect the environment on a global scale and the fight against illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs. As East-West tensions disappear, the question of establishing new guidelines for the international economic order asserts itself with renewed vigour.

There persist the perverse practices and mechanisms of protectionism and managed trade. Such partial openings as may occur are based on the rigid observance of the principle of reciprocity, to the detriment of more fragile economies. It is unsettling that efforts on behalf of economic and trade liberalization should share the stage with the present neo-protectionist wave. As it opens up its economy to the world, and in the understanding that an open world economy will be established, Brazil is participating in the current Uruguay Round and is confident that these negotiations, conducted within the framework of the

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General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, may correct the persistent disorder and atrophy affecting international trade.

The use of export subsidies and other domestic support measures on the part of developed nations has reached excessive levels, strongly affecting developing nations otherwise capable of increasing the world's supply of agricultural or agro-industrial products. It is deplorable that the protectionist arsenal currently in use by the developed world should hinder the increase in the level of world food production, while hunger still afflicts a large portion of mankind.

We look forward, with great hope, to balanced results in all areas currently under negotiation at the Uruguay Round, which may strengthen multilateralism and nullify restrictionist trends. We do not want the freezing of North-South inequalities or the continued stifling of free competition by artificial means.

In the context of well-known economic difficulties faced by the major economic Powers, both domestically and in their relations with each other, there looms the risk that the megablocs will not be guided by global interests, by the logic of economic openness and a sense of the whole. On the contrary, there is a risk that they will degenerate into veritable "trade fortresses". Twin challenges have come to further cloud that outlook. The first concerns the orderly absorption of East European countries into the world market in such a way that this far-reaching and positive development does not disrupt traditional North-South trade and investment flows nor add further cause of disarray to the already precarious state of the economies of the developing countries. The second challenge derives from the persistent and radical economic inequality among nations, a fact that is in itself one of the major obstacles to the full development of social and economic forces on a world scale. The issue of economic development and international co-operation must be placed at the top of the multilateral agenda.

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In Brazil a comprehensive and coherent programme of social and economic reform is being developed which, in order to be swiftly implemented, calls for a prompt inflow of foreign funds, granted on favourable and mutually beneficial terms. Such measures as have been adopted are already reversing an economic situation the prospects of which were distressing, and are paving the way for the immediate restoration of international co-operation with our country, Brazil.

We trust this effort will meet with a positive response from our most significant partners in the developed world. We wish to make the best of the present moment, in which the new supersedes the old in so many ways. Brazil wishes to play in full its role in the conception of a global framework of peace and co-operation.

In this regard, by adopting the Declaration on International Economic Co-operation last May, this Assembly came to recognize, through the unanimous voice of its Member States, that the economic revitalization of the developing countries is the major challenge of the present decade.

Brazil is seeking economic efficiency and desires that the economy of every developing country become productive. Such a goal may be reached if the world economy is better organized. This is a responsibility shared by all countries. The persistence of hunger, the deprivation of minimum amenities and the extreme economic hardship in many areas ultimately affect the whole by way of environmental devastation, systematic violation of human rights, and the production and illegal trafficking in drugs. The conscience and the way of life of every society are thus disastrously affected.

The last decade, though propitious for public liberties and political pluralism, was at the same time cruel and parsimonious towards economic and social development. Development, however, is crucial for the consolidation of democratic

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institutions. The titanic efforts of many of the peoples of the developing world came to naught by virtue of the enormous and continuing transfer abroad of assets essential to economic growth and investment.

Finding a permanent solution to the problem of foreign debt is a task of urgent and overriding concern for the future of the developing countries, and especially Latin America. The economic recovery of our peoples is an unavoidable imperative that cannot be sacrificed and that will not be sacrificed. Economic stabilization and modernization initiatives in developing countries and, especially, their fuller integration into the world economy, would be threatened if the foreign debt problem were to retain its present features. It seems indispensable that a serious, frank and creative dialogue should bring about solutions at the international level making for the resumption of the process of economic growth and the development of our peoples.

(President Collor)

The second major issue of the new international agenda concerns the environment.

I wish to extend from this rostrum an invitation to the world to come to Brazil in 1992 for the great United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, perhaps the most important international meeting to be held in this century, by virtue of the issue it addresses, which is of vital interest to mankind, and in the light of the expected number of participants, including some at the non-governmental level. I invite all Heads of State and Government to attend that event. Brazil welcomes you with open arms.

That meeting will lead to a more precise definition of the generic concern for the environment, and it will also allow agreements to be concluded on the basis of a sense of shared responsibility on the part of all international actors. For this to occur, it is incumbent upon Governments to take up their responsibilities and to revise their objectives. Brazil stands ready to do its part and is already doing its part, confident that other countries will do the same.

We are energetically tackling Brazil's environmental problems. Despite serious economic difficulties, grave social problems and the huge expanse of our territory, the Government and society of Brazil are already making efforts in the realm of the environment that compare favourably to those of other countries. As environmental monitoring develops in Brazil, we are proceeding to establish a zoning system for the country, notably in the Amazon, so as to delimit scientifically the large areas that must be fully preserved, as well as those that will serve economic development in different degrees and under rigorous discipline.

Like all other developing countries, Brazil needs easier access to technologies that will permit the elimination of damages to the environment and

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that are environmentally safe. Such technologies should be used for the benefit of all countries. There is an urgent need for financial conditions to be established at the international level which will allow such technologies to be applied in competitive terms.

The countries that throughout history have contributed the most to the pollution of the environment have the greatest share of responsibility in this respect. By facilitating the availability of technologies and resources, these countries will play a crucial role in reversing the situation of environmental calamity unjustly inherited by the present generation and in offering appropriate solutions. The benefits should not be monopolized or concentrated among the few but should rather be spread out as much as possible. In a spirit of fairness we foresee that the more developed countries will commit greater resources to the correction of environmental problems. Such correction must not, even indirectly, widen the gap between rich and poor countries. A higher level of international solidarity is called for as regards the use of modern, low-cost technologies.

Aware of the fact that access to technology, as well as to its production and use, is a new and necessary economic paradigm, Brazil cannot but express its strong concern with the barriers that still persist to free exchange in such a decisive domain.

What is at stake is nothing less than our chances for integration into the dynamic core of the world economy. Those countries that are subordinate in the field of technology will also be subordinate in the new international division of labour arising from technological development. International barriers portray the grim policies that virtually shunt aside countries of late industrialization.

The concerns of Brazil are understandable not only on account of its technological capacity - which is among the most advanced in the developing world -

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but also because we live under democratic normalcy, with truly functioning institutions and a Government which is uncompromisingly faithful to the rule of law and to its international commitments.

I could not fail to refer to the importance that the issue of human rights is gaining on our common agenda. In view of the current expansion of democratic ideals, international consideration of this matter will gain in scope and incisiveness.

Brazil firmly supports this trend. We believe, in fact, that the world is on the threshold of a qualitative leap in this area. Affronts to human rights must be denounced and fought with the same vigour wherever they may occur. One of my paramount concerns in this field is preserving the life and customs of the indigenous communities of Brazil. To this end, my Government has taken drastic measures during the first six months of its mandate in an attitude of absolute respect for and unyielding protection of the rights of the Brazilian Indian. A great deal remains to be done and will indeed be done.

By its efforts, the international community can be of precious help in creating world-wide conditions which would guarantee the observance of human rights in their broadest sense. It is today incumbent upon all countries to take up new obligations in ensuring the individual greater freedom of movement across borders, in eliminating every vestige of discrimination and protecting the rights of foreigners. Human rights must be increasingly understood in their entirety, without artificial or specious distinctions among their various modalities.

Every feature of the new world structure points to the growth of the United Nations. Important institutional changes in this Organization may be foreseen, even before its fiftieth anniversary, to translate into terms of multilateral diplomacy the international realities emerging everywhere.

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The world did not stop in 1945, and a new phase in history has been in the making in the past 12 months. The United Nations, in particular, is giving evidence of increased diplomatic energy. However, the renewed tendency on the part of the permanent members of the Security Council to act as a bloc in certain instances does not seem to be in itself enough to steer us towards an institutional redefinition of the Organization and of the Council itself.

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For the United Nations, as the foremost, if not the only, forum of universal scope, to be able to respond to current challenges, it will prove necessary to return to the original political intentions of the Charter, which have so often been misinterpreted, even in recent times. Those intentions struck a clear balance between the prerogatives of the permanent members of the Security Council and the preservation of the sovereign equality of Member States. The latter is a fundamental principle which should be followed as part of the negotiating process in all organs of the United Nations, including the Security Council.

The new multilateralism must be truly innovative and true to the principle of equitable representation, lest it become a sterile formula or a disguise for a deeper political crisis. The last few weeks have not only clearly, directly and dramatically illustrated the system of international relations, but also exposed its instability and vulnerability. Never before have politics and diplomacy been so necessary on the multilateral scene.

As we build new political and economic structures, increasing claims for justice and participation in the international order are to be added to our quest for efficiency. Our common endeavour in this Hall is, after all, the search for a modernity applicable to all nations, one in which we all identify a human face. What we wish for, from the depth of our hearts, is a world of peace, co-operation, prosperity, justice; a world built upon the basic principles of international law; a world in which we may discern on the horizon the better future that our peoples so dearly hope for, deserve and are sure to achieve.

May God be with us.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Fernando Collor, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

ADDRESS BY MR. FRANCOIS MITTERRAND, PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the French Republic.

Mr. François Mitterrand, President of the French Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the French Republic, His Excellency Mr. François Mitterrand, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President MITTERRAND (interpretation from French): This is the third time I am speaking before the Assembly, and I feel that this is an honour both for my country and for me personally.

I congratulate you, Mr. President, on having been chosen to guide the debates of an Organization which since its creation has perhaps never had such heavy responsibilities. I hail the country you represent.

I now turn to the Secretary-General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, and I thank him for the talent, strength of conviction and tireless activities he has been devoting to the United Nations and which have contributed so much to its renewal.

Two years ago from this rostrum I referred to the prospects for freedom. How much headway has since been made. In many countries, on all continents, democracy has won out, in places where it was often thought that it would be kept away for a long time to come. Borders can no longer contain its radiating strength.

Think of the drastic changes that occurred in Europe and throughout the world in 1989, of the deep popular movements which, like the French Revolution 200 years ago, overcame everything: structures, systems, ways of thinking and acting, powers and fears - and all for the sole, compelling need to live differently, in keeping with the requirements of the spirit.

(President Mitterrand)

When the walls that separated peoples came tumbling down - walls built in the mistaken belief that the order they were protecting would forever escape the great winds of space, of dreams and of ideas - I remember saying to my compatriots in France that, in these happy hours of which there are so few in history, the end of an order did not necessarily mean that another order would immediately be born, and that it would be very difficult.

I ask the Assembly: What are we to make of this new era which is at once so promising and so perilous? Yes, what shall we make of it?

The confrontation of military blocs long ensured peace, while maintaining conflicts in a geographical context. After the Second World War, we witnessed more than 100 regional conflicts. What we call the South had become the theatre for battles which were no longer taking place in the North. The gain for one camp was perceived as a loss for the other. Although this summary arithmetic is now outmoded, one sees how for almost half a century it blocked evolution towards settlement and lessening of tension, how it prolonged the suffering and mourning of sorely tried peoples, how it served as a laboratory for power relations and how it prolonged the dependency of millions of human beings who once thought they were masters of their destiny.

The end of the East-West conflict should be hailed as the triumph of reason and of a sense of responsibility. And this conquest is due to the courage and the clear-sightedness of certain men who were able to change the course of history and overcome immediate interests and the clash of ideology in order to conceive of a new balance which would no longer be based on universal terror. Here, I wish to say that mankind owes them a great deal of gratitude and respect.

However, I would refrain from engaging in premature optimism. Like everyone else, I know how much illusion there can be in a vision of the world that had, all of a sudden and without any difficulty, found its way. There remain numerous

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flagrant, intolerable violations of human rights. Ethnic and religious minorities are still persecuted. Interests are as brutal as ever: the strong still lie in wait for the weak, and the oppressed entertains revenge. Nevertheless, henceforth the confrontation of blocs can no longer serve as an excuse for those who fear risking democracy, for those who believe that they can postpone until later what is expected of them today. In saying that, I have in mind - and you have understood it - North-South relations.

In a world where no one, not even the most powerful, can escape the interdependence of destinies, one is tempted to look inwards to find a way out, as if the only way to affirm one's identity and differences would be to deny those of others, as if this need could find an answer in xenophobia or nationalism.

A good example of this will be the conclusion to be found to the crisis brought about by the Iraqi aggression, just as the tragedy in Liberia serves as a warning. If we are not careful, the unique opportunity offered by the demise of blocs will become a bad dream.

(President Mitterrand)

To prevent anarchy, disprove the theory that might makes right and avoid the imposition of an alliance of the powerful of an order in which others have no voice, I know of nothing but the rule of law. Yes: law. No one - no State, no philosophy - has a monopoly on law. Law reflects the general will. And is it not remarkable that we are now witnessing the emergence of a nearly universal agreement on the simple values: freedom - freedom to speak, to act, to travel and to elect one's leaders - equality, justice, respect for human rights, tolerance, and the acceptance of differences. All these are values that stress the value of dialogue over force. We all know that there can be lasting peace and freedom in relationships between peoples only if States agree to follow common rules, which it is your responsibility to lay down.

With the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation paralysed, the United Nations - 45 years - is now coming into its own as a genuine judge, defining and trying to implement the law; it is beginning thus to fulfil its mandate under the San Francisco Charter. On that basis, everything will - or at least can - change.

We must all understand that the dawning of the rule of law concerns us all. What country can feel safe from violence, high-handedness and domination by others? The time has come for international law to reign. We need only take decisions and actions on that basis.

In recent years, in fact, the Organization has increasingly been successfully involved in the settlement of conflicts: Namibia, Nicaragua, the Iraq-Iran war and, soon I hope, Cambodia. United Nations efforts to eliminate the hateful apartheid régime have finally been met by the good will of two men, both South Africans, both having the ear of their respective communities: Nelson Mandela and Frederik de Klerk.

But we must go further. We are faced with a choice between the law of the jungle and the rule of law. What will happen if we refuse to choose? The

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alternative is between those who want law to triumph and those who are content with the dictates of violence.

I am thinking now, of course, of the Gulf crisis. The conflict initiated by Iraq against Kuwait showed that the Security Council could act quickly and with one voice. From the onset of the crisis, my country, a permanent member of that body, voted for and at times initiated successive resolutions adopted there. We continue to stand in full solidarity. Let me explain why.

Kuwait is a sovereign State member of the international community. On what basis can it be decided that that State has ceased to exist? On the basis of the "law" of aeroplanes, tanks and cannon?

I should note here that France has long had friendly relations with Iraq; we supported it at the time of greatest danger, during its war with Iran, with a view to preserving, on the age-old border, the historical balance between Persians and Arabs, the destruction of which would have had a chain reaction in the entire Arab world right to the shores of the Atlantic. I do not deny the links of friendship forged in those circumstances between the Iraqi and French peoples, and I hope that in spite of everything they will survive this trial.

But France is first and foremost in the service of the law as defined by this arbiter between nations: the Organization. We are implementing the embargo decreed by the Security Council, and we are helping ensure its general implementation. To that end, we have sent air and naval forces to the Gulf region, but in doing so we have made no threatening or provocative gesture. Our policy is the policy of the United Nations. Moreover, we have informed the Iraqi authorities that we will stand by anyone who is the victim of new aggression in the region.

Our actions are defensive, not offensive, but they will be neither accomplices nor idle observers. When their mission was accomplished, our forces will leave the area and return home.

(President Mitterrand)

How can we not be disgusted at the taking of thousands of hostages, including more than 500 of my compatriots, until recently welcomed by Iraq - as it has itself admitted - as guests, as friends trusting in the hospitality of a noble people, among the oldest and most illustrious on Earth. How can we accept that some of them are serving as human shields in a fight which is not their own? How can we accept the violation and looting of the residence of our Ambassador in Kuwait and the arresting of its occupants? If this was really done in error, why did it take so long to admit it, and why was the number of hostages swelled with these new victims?

In the face of these repeated acts, I took the decision dictated by honour and solidarity, and sent land reinforcements to threatened countries neighbours of Iraq. My orders remain as they were: to ensure the success of the embargo and thus to impose the implementation of Security Council resolutions, to contain all aggression, to serve peace with respect for law, giving no quarter to violence. I add that France is acting in close agreement with its 11 partners in the European Community and the Western European Union, and in co-ordination with United States, Arab and other military forces deployed in the Middle East for the same reasons. That co-ordination in no way affects our autonomy of decision.

We continue to be prepared to pursue and search for any possibility for peace, for ours is a logic of peace, standing against the logic of war that Iraqi policy has imposed upon an anguished world and that seems to prevail. To date, not one action, not one word by the President of Iraq has held out even a glimmer of hope for conciliation. He ignores or rejects the supreme body, the United Nations, an Organization which was created in the wake of the Second World War by nations that knew the cost of blooshed and death, having been twice unable to triumph over the inevitability of disaster.

(President Mitterrand)

What will Iraq say if the conditions set forth in the Security Council resolutions are imposed? They were agreed upon unanimously and cannot be revoked. Is this the end of hope? Is there no room for peace? We do not wish to pronounce such a verdict.

Several plans, now including that of Heads of State and Government of the Arab States, have opened up new prospects. I am pleased by this. France had hoped the countries of that region would arbitrate among themselves to solve disputes that pit them against each other. I should like here to state that that is still our hope. It is desirable that there be an end to any doubt or suspicion about any armed intervention by Western Powers. But the Arab nation has not yet overcome the divisions that have separated it, and thus far it has only expressed desires.

In the absence of such a solution, it would be my preference that we see in what context diplomacy might still prevail over confrontation. Let us be clear about this. I say there can be no compromise so long as Iraq does not comply with the views of the Security Council and withdraw from Kuwait. That country's sovereignty is not negotiable, any more than any other's. Think of the men and women living under foreign occupation who must choose exile, and of neighbouring peoples which, if things get out of control, will be at the mercy of the expansionist determination of one man, of one warlike State. If, on the other hand, Iraq were to affirm its intention to withdraw its troops and free the hostages, everything might become possible.

At the second stage, as I perceive things, the international community, which has condemned the aggression, would be able to guarantee the withdrawal of military forces, the restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty and exercise of the democratic will of the Kuwaiti people.

Then the third stage, which the whole world is anticipating without much hope, would begin - a stage that today seems to be beyond our reach, or is feared because

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it will be a time for choices when we must replace confrontation in the Middle East with the dynamics of good-neighbourliness and security and peace for each and every country.

I have in mind Lebanon, which has been unable to regain full sovereignty over its territory and is still occupied by foreign troops and divided by opposing forces. I have in mind the Palestinians who are prey to despair and tempted by all kinds of adventures to meet their legitimate aspirations to have their own homeland in which they can create State structures of their choice. I have in mind Israel, which is living in constant insecurity. In a word, I have in mind all those countries where war, declared or not, has become their daily lot.

I am not talking about a mixture of different kinds of conflict. Nor do I claim to be able to solve all these problems through any magic recipe, because any comprehensive step would be unrealistic and dangerous and give an excuse to do nothing.

Our initiative implies dialogue, direct dialogue between those concerned, agreement with neighbouring States, and finally the irreplaceable approval of this Assembly. And at the end of that road we must take up the idea of an international conference as the catalyst and the guarantor of the implementation of any successful negotiation.

Above and beyond this, we might think of a fourth stage, with a mutually agreed reduction of armaments in the region, the beginning of co-operation from Iran to Morocco, from the Middle East to the Atlantic, and stability and prosperity in a region that, because of its history, culture and invaluable contribution to humanity, is called upon to play an important role in human affairs.

But let us now look at ourselves. We too must ask questions and answer questions that are arising everywhere. So many previous resolutions of the Security Council have remained dead letters - the result, I like to believe, of the

(President Mitterrand)

mutual neutralization caused by the East-West antagonism, which condemned the Near and Middle East to a kind of war of positions - a ruinous, desperate war. That situation has today, and with some reason, nourished the Arab world's criticism of the sudden diligence of the United Nations in regard to Iraq. And it is true that in this shortcoming there is an unfortunate element that somewhat undercuts the real authority of our recent decisions. But we are united in our belief that law and justice should be the same for all - in principle and in effect.

Now I should like to emphasize a crucial point that has always been of concern to international bodies and is now brought into sharp focus. If the Middle East conflict is not a North-South conflict because it does not pit a rich country against a poor one, the fact remains that the embargo, the reduction of oil supplies and increased prices have worsened the already difficult living conditions in the developing countries. If we come to the assistance of those close to the conflict, which are those most directly affected by it - and with this I fully agree - above and beyond that, we must renew the unfinished debate on North-South relations between the rich and the poor, between the highly industrialized countries and those that lack the means to pay their debts or to revitalize their anaemic economies. The year 2000 is approaching, and each day some 40,000 children the world over are still dying from hunger and sicknesses for which treatments and vaccines are available.

(President Mitterrand)

In a few days a World Summit for Children will be held here in New York to consider such problems. But we must also be aware that there are other injustices which in themselves constitute unbearable violence and that violence gives rise to still further injustices. How can those hundreds of millions of human beings who live in the direst poverty, deprived of everything including a future, be expected to have an awareness of a society based on the rule of law? Who, denied and rejected, can honour a law from which he himself is excluded? Like it or not, North and South are partners in a common history. It is high time that both sides understood that fact. Some progress has been achieved in recent years, but it still falls far short of what is needed. Is it normal that countries that have gone into debt in order to develop their economies should find themselves crushed beneath the burden of that indebtedness, or that people should work and produce more only to receive less, solely to repay the interest on their country's loans, subject to fluctuations in foreign exchange? Is it normal that Africa and Latin America, to mention only those continents, should have experienced a constant drop in export earnings throughout the past decade or that, notwithstanding the large amounts of aid it receives, the South continues to finance the North, because the net transfer from South to North has increased, as of this year, by another $10 billion, thus reaching the sum of $43 billion?

We can, of course, note some progress. At the Conference of Least-Developed Countries held at Paris this month we noted a fortunate but insufficient trend. At Toronto in 1988, at the summit meeting held at the Grande Arche in Paris in 1989, the largest industrial countries came up with various methods designed to bring about a reduction in world indebtedness. Some States, including France, forgave the debts of the poorest countries. As for the European Community, through its renewal of the Lomé agreements with 60 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and a large increase in its contributions it has dealt forthrightly with an inherently

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explosive state of affairs and has laid the ground for a first step towards making exports more feasible.

Other initiatives have been undertaken with a view to redressing the imbalance, which nevertheless cannot but increase. But how can such steps withstand the increased speculation in raw materials? I look forward to the long-announced and long-hoped-for discussion of a comprehensive plan for assistance to the developing world, a plan that would be fed by new resources and that would lay the ground for an in-depth consideration of the subject by all the participants in what could well become a tragedy to end all tragedies if we do not make up our minds to change our ways, to step up our pace and to rethink our goals.

In spite of all I have just said I believe that an era of hope is dawning for mankind if all peoples can agree to overcome their perception of history as unalterable and their interests as unchangeable. And yes, I do believe that that is possible. After having engaged in destructive combat with each other three times in less than a century, France and Germany are now reconciled. How rare this is! Today they are joined in a special relationship; they are members of the same Community, they meet regularly, they are joined in mutual respect and they are establishing a friendship. As I speak today, a few days prior to German reunification, far from dwelling on the tragedies of the past our peoples are looking together towards the future. From New York, I salute the Germans, who are preparing to celebrate this great event in their history, and I send them France's best wishes.

Today, French-German understanding is a fact, as you know, within the framework of the European Community, the Twelve, and there too how many agreements, how many battles and how many conflicting, age-old ambitions moved towards a solution when, 40 years ago, in a daring and almost unbelievable move, European countries - first 6, then 9, then 10 and finally 12 - joined their destinies so

(President Mitterrand)

closely that soon their borders will disappear and soon there will be a single, common market, a monetary union and a political organization without precedent in the world, with a population of some 340 million persons.

We wonder at the determination and imagination of those in the post-war generation who have led us to this result. And yet there is an even broader plan to come, a plan that has just begun to take shape, an even vaster plan that will cause us as Europeans to look beyond the Twelve and off to the distant horizon to take in all the historical and geographical continent of Europe. The meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe to be held in Paris on 17 November of this year will define the content of that plan and set up permanent bodies to work towards that Europe. What would our old continent be like today if bold action had not prevailed over generally accepted ideas, if its peoples and their leaders had not determined to build a future that would be different from the past?

A part of that Europe are the so-called Eastern countries, countries that yesterday belonged to another, competitive and adversary system. Today they are the masters of their own fates. And how, by what means? Surely they should draw closer to the European Community, either by associating themselves with it or by seeking ways in which they can eventually come together. We must think of them, for they are our brothers, and their actions will influence and affect ours, until all the countries of Europe are more solidly linked together, the countries of the East and those of the Community, the free-trade countries and those without allegiance to any system, in what I have called a confederation, in an organization with its own rules and in which each country can build its future together with its neighbours, each able to act on its own behalf.

(President Mitterrand)

In building the future we must also pursue disarmament, an area in which Europe has provided the first actual proving-ground. But as all present here today are aware, disarmament is a world-wide necessity, and in our region the task is far from complete.

The Vienna Talks on so-called conventional disarmament must be concluded as soon as possible, but in the other areas, of biological, chemical and strategic weapons, the new balance in the world can no longer put up with the ruinous cost of the arms race.

(President Mitterrand)

We are at the crossroads of two centuries, and we can express our dreams in three words: disarmament, arbitration and collective security. There has been disorder, dictatorship and war all at the same time. Let us see to it that through the United Nations, right, solidarity and peace finally govern in these new times.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the French Republic for the important statement he has just made.

Mr. François Mitterrand, President of the French Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

AGENDA ITEM 9

GENERAL DEBATE

The PRESIDENT: I should like to remind representatives that, in accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting, the list of speakers will be closed on Wednesday, 26 September 1990, at 6 p.m. May I request delegations to be good enough to provide estimated speaking times that are as accurate as possible so that we may be able to plan our meetings in an orderly way.

I should like to remind members of the decision taken by the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting, on 21 September, that congratulations should not be expressed in the General Assembly after a statement has been delivered.

In this connection, may I also remind members of another decision taken by the Assembly at the same meeting, that speakers in the general debate, after delivering their statements, would leave the Assembly Hall through Room GA-200 at the rear of the podium before returning to their seats.

Mr. HANNIBALSSON (Iceland): Allow me, Mr. President, to congratulate you on your election to our highest office, presiding over this forum of the world's nations. I wish you every success and pledge you the sincere support of my delegation.

(Mr. Hannibalsson, Iceland)

I am delighted also to be able to use this opportunity to welcome Liechtenstein, our partner in the European Free Trade Association, as a new Member of the United Nations.

Our session is taking place this year against the background of earth-shaking events. Rarely has the United Nations been faced with challenges in world affairs as diverse or demanding as those it is currently being called upon to deal with. At the same time, we have a rare opportunity to make our world Organization fulfil the dreams of its founders.

In the last twelve months, a whirlwind of change has swept across the world. An air of co-operation and mutual trust has replaced the atmosphere of confrontation and distrust which marred East-West relations for over forty years. In Central and Eastern Europe dictatorships have tumbled and the ideology of communism is totally discredited. In a matter of days, Germany will be united and the last remaining symbol of a Europe divided thereby abolished. Conditions have thus been created for engineering a new order of peace and stability in Europe - in short, for rebuilding a Europe whole and free.

The benign effects of this profound transformation have been felt world-wide. For the first time we can now expect that energies, previously drained by military competition and the selfish pursuit of national ends, will be channelled into co-operative efforts in the service of humanity as a whole. The new, unprecedented commitment to collective action has brought in its wake certain undisputed advantages for the United Nations also.

(Mr. Hannibalsson, Iceland)

It has removed obstacles and given the Organization increased scope to exercise its powers in the interest of world security under the United Nations Charter. Recent successes, mainly in the area of regional disputes, have bolstered public confidence in the world Organization.

What a peculiar quirk of circumstances it is, therefore, that at precisely such a triumphant moment in its history the United Nations should be faced with the greatest test of its character in recent years. The invasion and annexation of Kuwait by Iraq are not only a flagrant violation of international law but a frontal attack on the very ideals of the United Nations. Surely it must be our foremost task to see to it that this first major crisis of the post-cold-war period does not make us turn back the clock in international affairs.

The world community has condemned the brutal aggression and unjustifiable acts perpetrated against thousands of foreign nationals held by Iraq against their will. The United Nations Security Council has reacted swiftly and with unanimity. But more will be required. To restore calm to the Persian Gulf the world community must demonstrate its undivided support for the resolutions of the Security Council and the actions of those who, in conformity with those resolutions, have assumed the burden of establishing a multinational force in the Gulf area. Given the heavy cost involved for a number of States, this will require an unusual degree of resolve and co-operation. Failure to display the necessary solidarity incurs the risk not only of undercutting the authority of the United Nations but also of undoing the progress achieved so far in our long and hard struggle for peace in the world at large.

The show of military aggression we have recently witnessed in the Persian Gulf reveals the volatile nature of peace in the world, even at a time when the super-Powers have forged a new partnership to contain such crises. We are reminded

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that peace in the world is not simply the absence of war but presupposes the acceptance of fundamental precepts of international conduct, including respect for national sovereignty, the right to self-determination, and the inviolability of international borders.

In a European context these principles have been enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Not least for that reason, we welcome the unification of Germany which, in accordance with the wishes of the German nation, will take place a few days from now. The establishment of new legal relationships between the parties concerned now offers a realistic prospect of long-term stability on the continent of Europe.

But while a new order of Europe is taking shape let us not turn a blind eye to those remaining features of the post-war era which have stubbornly resisted the forces of change. The situation of the Baltic republics is a case in point. The Baltic nations were independent States, recognized as such by the international community, a fact which military occupation and annexation cannot be allowed to change.

In the long run there can be no solution to this problem short of the full recognition of the Baltic republics' right to independence. It is to be welcomed that a political dialogue has now been established between the Baltic republics and the leadership of the Soviet Union and its constituent republics that will, it is hoped, pave the way for an orderly return to the status quo ante.

In the meantime Iceland, like other Nordic countries, wishes to see co-operation extended to the Baltic republics at various levels. Iceland would, furthermore, welcome the full participation of the Baltic republics in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Although elements of our post-war legacy may thus remain, there can be no denying that the armed peace among the major Powers is gradually being replaced by

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a more trusting set of relationships, where negotiated arms control and confidence building play an important role.

The East-West rapprochement has greatly enhanced the prospects for meaningful arms control. Significant progress has already been made in three major categories of modern weaponry: conventional, nuclear and chemical.

In the conventional area, it is of the utmost importance that a treaty between the member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and those of the Warsaw Pact to cut conventional forces in Europe be concluded as soon as possible. A conventional-force agreement, which should result in a defensive posture of military forces on the continent, constitutes a basic requisite for a new structure of security in Europe. It is to be hoped that negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union to reduce and limit their strategic nuclear forces will also lead to the substantial diminishing of the nuclear threat in the near future.

The current renaissance of the United Nations should serve to highlight the useful work of the Organization in the area of arms control, both in the General Assembly and at the Conference on Disarmament. At the Conference on Disarmament a global convention on a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons remains a priority. In the light of the bitter experience of the past, it is deplorable that these the most abhorrent of modern weapons should still be used against innocent civilians.

It is to be welcomed that the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban has been re-established within the Conference on Disarmament. Ultimately all nuclear-weapon testing must be brought to a halt. In the meantime the nuclear Powers must take effective measures to prevent the spread of radioactivity from their nuclear-testing sites. The Nordic countries, concerned about the serious danger that radioactive emissions and leaks might pose to the natural environment of the

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northern region, have urged the Soviet Union to abandon plans to transfer all its nuclear testing to the island of Novaya Zemlya.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the single most important multilateral agreement on disarmament and arms limitation. Since its entry into force no non-nuclear-weapon State party to the Treaty has acquired nuclear weapons. The recent Fourth Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty has strengthened this régime still further. Nevertheless, it is still a matter of concern that a number of States remain outside the Treaty. The crisis in the Gulf has underlined the urgent need to deal more effectively with the problem of proliferation in the nuclear, chemical and biological fields.

On the whole the direction of current arms-control negotiations is to develop régimes for most major areas of armament: the full spectrum of nuclear forces, conventional land and air forces in Europe, and chemical weapons. The only major area of armament not yet included in the arms-control agenda is the naval one. Sooner rather than later arms control will also have to extend to naval forces. In a European context, failure to include naval forces in arms-control negotiations could result in a differentiation of areas of security.

No one can deny that progress in arms control has taken place mostly outside the confines of the United Nations. This is not the case in the area of the protection of human rights, where the United Nations has played a central role.

The United Nations has been a pioneer in the definition of human rights through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other instruments. Having set the standards, the Organization has also acted decisively to implement them. The community of nations now recognizes that the proncouncements of international bodies on human rights should not be regarded as unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of individual States. However, this is not without exceptions, the obvious example still being South Africa.

(Mr. Hannibalsson, Iceland)

The realization by the people of Central and Eastern Europe of the indispensable role of human rights in the pursuit of prosperity and happiness has certainly been among the principal factors motivating the positive developments in their part of the world. Unfortunately, this lesson of the recent past seems to have been lost on the leaders of South Africa, who still maintain a notorious system of oppression.

Over the last year there has been a relaxation, but no major change, in the system of apartheid. The evils of the system remain and continued pressure must therefore be brought to bear on the South African leadership to respect the inalienable human rights of all citizens.

The Middle East is another area which gives cause for ever-growing concern. Lately, the problem of Israel and the Palestinians has been dangerously linked with the Iraq-Kuwait affair.

Iraq, having grossly misjudged the temperament of the times, now finds itself encircled by a huge majority of States supporting the resolutions of the Security Council. Having few options left, Iraq has tried to stir up Arab opposition to Israel in order to line up Arab States on its side. That is demagoguery of the most dangerous kind.

Even if Iraq does not succeed in spreading the fires from the Gulf area, the intractable problems of Israel and the Palestinians remain. Clearly, a peaceful settlement of the dispute will have to be a part of a comprehensive new order for the whole Middle East. To bring this about, Arabs and Israelis must take upon themselves the leading role.*

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*Mr. Thompson, Fiji, Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Hannibalsson, Iceland)

More encouraging news has recently come out of South East Asia. For some time it has been clear that the vexatious problem of Cambodia can only be solved through the good offices of the United Nations. The agreement of the warring factions in Cambodia to commit themselves to a United Nations framework for a comprehensive peace settlement in Cambodia is a major breakthrough. To give peace a chance, any possibility that the Khmer Rouge might again seize power must be eliminated. Hopefully, the comprehensive peace settlement marks the beginning of a new and stable security arrangement for the South East Asia region as a whole.

I referred earlier to the salutary world-wide effects of the transformation we have recently witnessed in Europe. But we cannot ignore concerns that financial assistance in suport of the current drive towards market economies in Central and Eastern Europe might absorb assistance otherwise earmarked for the developing countries. While difficult choices must be made, it is imperative that the industrialized countries find the appropriate balance in this regard.

Expanded and balanced world trade depends on economic improvement both in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and in the developing world. The enormous foreign debt burden of those countries must be relieved and the means found to create a more equitable sharing of financial resources between the developing countries on the one hand and the industrialized world on the other.

Financial assistance and debt relief must be combined with comprehensive plans for structural change. Bridging the gap between North and South will also require more attention being given to social factors, to health care, nutrition and education.

The principal task of development must be to secure for children health, nourishment and education. In the midst of peacekeeping activities, the United Nations has decided to put the children in world focus through the high-level

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meeting next weekend. We must all of us, developing and developed States, give a high priority to the children - to our future.

Let us also bear in mind that a direct link exists between environment and development.

The protection of the environment is one of the vital issues confronting the United Nations. Important groundwork has already been laid in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development in ordering priorities and recommending future options.

For a country like Iceland, overwhelmingly dependent on the resources of the sea, safeguarding the environment is a question of survival. From our point of view, it is of the utmost importance to take effective measures against pollution of the maritime environment, not least from land-based sources and radioactive waste.

The protection of the marine environment from nuclear contamination has not been dealt with adequately. Following Chernobyl, considerable attention has been given to nuclear reactors on land. But we cannot forget that sea-borne nuclear reactors are in reality mobile power plants. As such, they should be given no less serious consideration than nuclear reactors on land. During this session of the General Assembly, Iceland will propose a United Nations expert study on the potential risks to the marine environment posed by accidents involving sea-borne nuclear reactors.

In Iceland's view, existing legal instruments in the field of environmental protection are not sufficient to achieve the results we desire and should therefore be strengthened. International treaties in specific fields of the environment need to be negotiated. Hopefully, agreements on climate change and biological diversification will be adopted at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. But a more comprehensive approach is called for.

(Mr. Hannibalsson, Iceland)

What is needed is an agreement on the basic principles which must guide the community of States to ensure future sustainability of life on Earth. These principles should be embodied in a new, concise legal instrument which would be accepted by Governments as a constitution or charter.

The Conference on Environment and Development may be our best chance to take realistic steps to reverse the environmental degradation of our planet. Care must be taken that this does not become a meeting of empty generalities, mere declarations or timid action plans. Specific environmental problems must be dealt with concretely within the overall context of sound and sustainable development.

Time is not on our side in this great venture. It is estimated that during the next two years nearly 100 million acres of tropical forests will be extinguished: 12 billion tons of carbon dioxide and other toxic pollutants will foul the air. In two years 50 billion tons of productive topsoil will be lost.

To turn the tide in matters like these, matters of survival, will indeed be a major undertaking for our regenerated Organization in the years and decades ahead.

Mrs. de ST. JORRE (Seychelles) (interpretation from French): May I extend to the President the warmest congratulations of Seychelles on his unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly. We also extend our congratulations to his predecessor, Mr. Joseph Garba, for the competent way in which he directed the work of the forty-fourth session.

I should also like to pay a well-deserved tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the efforts he has made in the cause of peace and security the world over. We wish to assure him of our support in meeting his difficult responsibilities.

(Mrs. de St. Jorre, Seychelles)

At a time when we are preparing to celebrate the forty-fifth anniversary of our Organization, it is appropriate to recall, in these grave times, the circumstances that led to its establishment - the Second World War, an unprecedented disaster. It was at that time that nations traumatized by that deadly war resolved to preserve future generations from the scourge of war by bequeathing us the United Nations Charter.

The San Francisco Charter, in its immutable principles, remains today the best guarantor of peace and our collective security. Of course, we have not always been able to have those principles respected. But the climate of détente, dialogue and co-operation that prevailed just a few weeks ago gave us a glimpse of the possibility of a better world in which each would have his role.

Unfortunately, recent events in the Gulf have darkened the horizon. Once again, the use of force has prevailed. The invasion and occupation of Kuwait constitutes a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and of the sovereignty of a State. Through that violation, the entire international community has been flouted. This situation constitutes a total rejection of the duties and obligations of a State respectful of international law.

Nothing can justify the invasion and annexation of Kuwait by Iraq. That act is a part of outdated political thinking and we are duty-bound forcefully to condemn any violation of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States wherever such a violation occurs.

Therefore, and in accordance with the spirit of the United Nations Charter, the Seychelles demands the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait and the restoration of the sovereignty of that State. We call upon the United Nations, the Arab League and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to redouble their efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict that has pitted Iraq against Kuwait.

(Mrs. de St. Jorre, Seychelles)

The current crisis is all the more disturbing since it involves conflicts of interests that are not always justified. We all know that the invasion of Kuwait is unfortunately not an isolated case. It is one link in a chain of confrontations and military acts of aggression that have been unleashed whenever there is a desire to see so-called moral principles or national interests prevail. None the less, if the events of the relatively recent past are there to remind us that acts of force cannot prevail over the principle of State sovereignty, it is our duty to find a peaceful solution together to every specific situation of conflict.

More than ever before, the international community must remain watchful in order to prevent such an eventuality. It is a moral and undoubtedly financial task for all of us. But it is more particularly up to the major Powers to protect the small States. Unfortunately, very few of us have the means to see to it that law and morality prevail beyond our borders, much less to ensure our own national security.

It is clear that there was a widespread reaction in favour of Kuwait only because the events, consequences and stakes concern the entire world. But it would be extremely desirable to ensure that the mobilization mechanism came into play whenever a State finds itself subject to an act of aggression. On the other hand, if the major Powers have deterrent force, it is equally true that in no case should they act without a mandate from the United Nations.

The sad plight of Kuwait may to some extent be a result of the unbridled arms race on the part of the big Powers, in particular in the Middle East. Although it may be reassuring to note that that is no longer the case, we hope that the current crisis will not call into question, either in the medium or the long term, the current policy of disarmament. As regards the crisis itself, we can certainly hope that those same big Powers will preserve us from a disastrous conflict.

(Mrs. de St. Jorre, Seychelles)

The situation in the Gulf not only has taken pride of place over other problems but has also accentuated them. I have in mind in particular the Indian Ocean. For some years now the Republic of the Seychelles has been incessantly calling for the transformation of the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace, security and international co-operation. If the thaw in relations between the big Powers has undoubtedly contributed to changing the situation of tension, the Indian Ocean region remains the subject of the greed of others. That phenemonon can only widen, since the present situation in the Gulf could serve as a pretext for any party to be present militarily in our waters. How far we suddenly are - and yet how near - to the attainment of the objectives sought at the time General Assembly resolution 2832 (XXVI) was adopted.

Are we to believe that there is now no hope at all for the International Conference on the Indian Ocean? We do not believe that to be the case, and that is why today we, the countries of the Indian Ocean, renew our appeal to those who hold power and authority. We ask them to assume their responsibilities so that the Colombo Conference, so long awaited, can take place.

We must recognize none the less that in spite of certain setbacks there has been some progress in the global political situation. But there are still many areas which have been highlighted by the Gulf crisis and which call for action. I have in mind the threat of nuclear weapons, the problem of toxic waste, and chemical weapons. Viewed from the angle of this sword of Damocles - compounded by the present and future financial crisis - the preservation of the environment and the problem of debt and development are products of what I shall call an "infernal dialectic".

It is first and foremost up to the developing countries, of course, to implement genuine programmes aimed at improving the management of their

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environment. In the Seychelles the new national plan launched in June 1990 constitutes a renewal and strengthening of our commitment to the concept of lasting development based on ecological considerations.

It should not be forgotten that our heritage is not only of national interest but also of global interest. It is proper to recall that 42 per cent of Seychelles territory is classified as a natural preserve. Our concerns in that respect are well justified. We can even say that our environment is our primary export product. Our two main industries, tourism and fishing, depend on it entirely. The very future of our country is at stake.

None the less, in spite of all our goodwill, the challenge that the environment poses cannot be met on an individual basis. In that spirit, we are in favour of a concerted and multilateral approach in the quest for lasting and effective solutions to urgent problems. Resolute support on the part of the international community in the form of additional resources is absolutely necessary. This presupposes a redoubling of efforts on the part of the industrialized countries, and the shouldering of joint responsibilities that can supplement the programmes and measures taken for the environment by the developing countries. In this interdependent world the environment can thus become a privileged focal point for international co-operation.

(Mrs. de St. Jorre, Seychelles)

Of course, the International Conference on the Environment to be held in 1992 should be the opportunity to agree upon a global plan of action and practical measures for the protection of the environment at the dawning of the new century. My country is pleased that that Conference will be convened in the near future. We shall be participating actively in the Conference within our means.

None the less, we cannot expect magical solutions from the Conference. Furthermore, time is of the essence. The year 1992 may seem a distant date for those for whom the environment is a question of survival. That is why the efforts of those countries that are implementing real programmes to preserve their environment must be supported. The initiative of buying back part of the debt of a country in return for the implementation of conservation programmes is an innovative approach which deserves to be put into practice more often. None the less, we believe that in practice it has proven to be somewhat discriminatory, since thus far only certain countries have been able to benefit from this measure. In future all countries showing their resolve to preserve nature should be able to benefit from such stimulatory measures. Regardless of the solution adopted, a solution must be found because the future of our planet depends upon it.

With respect to the international economic situation, no one is really inclined towards optimism. The economic situation of Africa and of the developing countries in general is today of greater concern than ever before. We must note that while there have been certain signs of economic recovery in some third-world countries, in many others living standards have declined dramatically. The per capita gross national product has declined sharply because of an increase in debt repayments amounting to over one quarter of the total export income.*

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* The President returned to the Chair.

(Mrs. de St. Jorre, Seychelles)

Third-world countries today are on the brink of bankruptcy and of the most serious recession ever experienced. The crisis in the Gulf, with all its consequences, can only further aggravate an already disastrous situation.

For many countries the crisis in the Gulf means that the initial development achievements that had been registered have come to naught. Not only have their needs for foreign currency to repay their debts and import oil considerably increased, but assistance will become more scarce and more expensive. Certain donor countries have already announced budgetary restrictions and aid reductions. This means that regardless of the outcome of the current crisis a process of deterioration is now already under way, no matter how quickly the conflict is resolved.

It is therefore more apparent than ever before that only a more constructive vision of the international economic order will enable us to design possible solutions. It seems to me that this is now the overriding role of the United Nations, whose primary objective remains the construction of a more united world.

New struggles require our commitment: the poverty of millions of human beings; our threatened environment; the appearance of new flashpoints of tension. But these are not insurmountable challenges. They require a renewal of our faith in dialogue and a new climate of co-operation and harmonization. We hope that this session of the General Assembly will bring new momentum towards a more secure future and that it will contribute to relaunching a dialogue, establishing peace and creating a climate conducive to development, which has been so gravely threatened.

Mr. SKUBISZEWSKI (Poland): Allow me, Sir, to add my congratulations on your election to the presidency of this important session. Let me also express to the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, our deep respect for his

(Mr. Skubiszewski, Poland)

tireless service to the Organization. And it is with great pleasure that Poland welcomes Namibia and Liechtenstein in our midst.

During the year that has elapsed since the last session we have witnessed the end of the cold war. The world has changed beyond recognition. However, we now face a novel danger: the armed conflict in the Gulf region, which constitutes an immense challenge to the delicate fabric of new global relationships.

The key issue of the United Nations political strategy is the prevention of the use of any means, and particularly the use of force, against the existence and independence of any State. This includes the territorial integrity of States.

I have used the term "key issue" because respect for the principles and rules I have mentioned is the premise of any international action and effort with a view to putting into effect the global goals and tasks of the organized international community. The United Nations will be unable to have even modest achievements in any of the basic areas of world co-operation if aggression goes unpunished, frontiers are violated and States are annexed.

Therefore, in considering the effects of Iraqi aggression against Kuwait, we should realize that it is the very sense and the very purpose of our Organization that are at stake. We are at a critical moment. Yet we have some reasons for optimism.

One of them is the fact that the Security Council is, at last, in a position to exercise its lawful powers, which in the past had so often remained dormant in spite of international frictions and conflicts that called for resolute action.

There has always been - but especially during recent years - much talk, inside and outside the Organization, about the adaptation of structures and methods at the United Nations. In the case of the Iraqi war against Kuwait, the Organization was

(Mr. Skubiszewski, Poland)

able to put the powers inscribed in the Charter to their proper use. Allow me to quote the distinguished French jurist the late Judge Guy de Lacharrière, who, discussing the problem of changes in the Organization, rightly asked: "Would not the application of the Charter be the most important reform?". This is what is in progress now and it should be supported as our standard procedure. If an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, the Charter, including its Article 51, gives ample room for action aimed at restoring State independence and existing frontiers.

(Mr. Skubiszewski, Poland)

Another reason for satisfaction is the international response to the Security Council resolutions dealing with the Iraqi aggression.

Poland is implementing them fully and will take any further action that might be ordered or authorized by the Security Council. We have prevented imports from and exports to Iraq and occupied Kuwait, and we have taken other measures in conformity with the Security Council decisions. It should be noted that Polish companies and enterprises have lost a lot of business through the interruption of trade with Iraq and Kuwait. Our support for, and participation in, the United Nations action has cost us, as of today, $570 million, and we expect this sum to increase at the end of the year to $1.4 billion. These losses come at a moment which is crucial to our economic reform, and they are a serious blow to our national effort.

However, I think that certain national and international values cannot be assessed by reference to any measurable or calculable price. They should be fostered and cherished whatever the cost. Without them we lose any sense of purpose. One such value is solidarity among men and women in both national and international dimensions.

During the past decade the concept and the ethics of solidarity have had an unusual impact on public life in Poland, and this in spite of the obvious counterweight created by the realities of everyday politics. I think that by introducing solidarity as the basic notion of public activity, Poles have shown that in our world of unlimited egoism, violence, and the incredible richness of some and the inhuman deprivations and humiliating poverty of others, there is a better road ahead. The Polish idea and practice of solidarity has had its international impact by contributing to the creation of circumstances propitious to the great event of our time: the fall of totalitarianism in Europe and the resulting unification of Germany. On the day of unification, the Polish nation

(Mr. Skubiszewski, Poland)

extends its best wishes and its cordial thoughts to the German nation and looks forward to the forging of a community of interests with its western neighbour.

We have started building a post-cold-war order. Its architecture is in the process of being devised. We must take a long view, but one thing is certain: the United Nations is now facing a tremendous task and an epoch-making challenge.

Of course, there is a real need for new regional arrangements, and especially one that would respond to the lessons of the present crisis in the Persian Gulf.

Indeed, Poland regrets that up till now the conflict could not have been resolved by peaceful means within the family of Arab nations. With that family, we have always had friendly relations and various ties, and we wish to maintain them, provided the international rule of law is respected.

For these reasons, bearing in mind its relations with Islam in past centuries, and, obviously, being aware of the fact that the present is different from the past, Poland supports the working out of stable and far-sighted policies towards the Arab countries, and generally the Islamic countries - I refer to policies of States participating in the Helsinki process.

However, the more immediate answer today lies in the application of the United Nations Charter. The problem, politically and economically, is global. Here we come to the international dimension of solidarity, that is solidarity among peoples and nations.

In this spirit, Poland has decided to participate in the multinational effort and to send a hospital ship and a field hospital to the Gulf area.

In condemning aggression and occupation we must also remember that other violations of international law have taken place. The law prohibits the taking of hostages in whatever form this might happen. Human rights of foreign nationals in Iraq and in occupied Kuwait should be vindicated.

(Mr. Skubiszewski, Poland)

Let me, finally, say that in our eyes Kuwait continues to exist as a State, in spite of the invasion and in spite of what has happened after it. It is a rule of both United Nations law and general international law that:

"No territorial acquisition resulting from the threat or use of force shall be recognized as legal." (resolution 2625 (XXV), annex, para. 1)

The Republic of Poland adheres to the primacy of the rule of law in inter-State relations. It is with deep satisfaction that I have listened to the words of Mr. François Mitterrand, President of the French Republic, on the rule of law in the international community. I subscribe to those words. The United Nations Decade of International Law should enhance the rule of international law and encourage the progressive development and codification of that law.

During the Decade, more attention should be focused on the important work of the International Law Commission and on the extent to which it fulfils its mandate. The Commission should not engage in topics and discussions which rather belong to the academic field. It should take up the great legal issues of our time, and at the same time it should elaborate specific law-making treaties on problems promoting the regulation of such issues. In that task there is also room for the Commission's co-operation with other international agencies. Protection of the environment is a case in point.

Within the Assembly the role of the Sixth Committee should be enhanced. In particular, both the International Law Commission and the Sixth Committee could have a part in the Assembly procedures whenever the Assembly intends to adopt a law-declaring or law-influencing resolution. Generally, the present role of the Sixth Committee is too static.

One of the safeguards of the rule of law is the functioning of international tribunals. Even the most acute political disputes have their legal aspects, and

(Mr. Skubiszewski, Poland)

they can be resolved by judicial bodies. Such settlement no doubt relieves tension and contributes to the elimination of conflicts among States where classical diplomacy proved has impotent. The present considerable number of cases brought before the International Court of Justice at The Hague augurs well for States' respect for law.

As promised last year in this Hall, Poland has accepted the compulsory jurisdiction of the Hague Court.

(Mr. Skubiszewski, Poland)

Poland supports the idea of establishing an international criminal court or other mechanism with jurisdiction over persons.

Poland attaches great importance to the protection of human rights as a factor in the preservation of peace and democracy. We shall soon adhere to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We have accepted the competence of the Human Rights Committee under article 41 of that Covenant. We are prepared to become a party to the European Convention on Human Rights and to develop further the human dimension of the Helsinki process. We are considering joining the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

Poland has been actively engaged in work on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A few days ago the lower chamber of the Polish Parliament, the Diet, adopted a law authorizing the Head of State to ratify the Convention.

The developments of the past year have reaffirmed the role of the United Nations in peace-keeping. Co-operation among many States, including the permanent members of the Security Council, has enabled the United Nations to carry out those responsibilities. Poland has made a contribution to peace-keeping efforts. More than 16,000 Polish soldiers have served under the United Nations flag in the course of the past 17 years. Poland is ready to continue to participate in peace-keeping operations.

Poland supports the plan on Cambodia and declares its readiness to join the international mechanism envisaged for the implementation of that plan.

In that context, it is worth while recalling that the United Nations definition of peace is not negative: According to the Charter, peace does not mean the mere absence of armed conflict. In this increasingly interdependent world, it would be an oversimplification to see military conflicts, nationalism and armaments as the only threats to our common security. The disparity between rich countries

(Mr. Skubiszewski, Poland)

and poor countries, between abundance and poverty, is another fundamental challenge to the United Nations.

The absence of growth in developing countries, massive migration, low living standards which encourage drug trafficking and violence, acquired immune-deficiency syndrome (AIDS), transboundary industrial pollution: all of these are threats confronting mankind. A new deal consisting of debt reduction, technology transfer, credit lines, direct investment and access to markets seems to be the answer for countries caught in a vicious circle of retrogression, socio-political instability and financial crisis.

External indebtedness stands in the forefront. In our view, there is an urgent need for imaginative debt reduction, including schemes aimed at preventing further polarization between creditors and debtors and at reintegrating debtors into the world economy and world trade.

Another vital question relates to the environment. His Excellency Mr. Fernando Collor, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, has just made inspiring comments on that question. I should like to refer also to the views just expressed on that problem by Her Excellency Mrs. Danielle de St. Jorre, Minister for Planning and Foreign Affairs of Seychelles. The growing interdependence between economic development and the environment should always be present in our minds. Poland welcomes the Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Brazil in 1992. The recent Conference of Baltic States, held at Ronneby, Sweden, was a good example of the regional approach to the problem.

Many countries have suffered heavy losses as a result of the present conflict in the Gulf area. His Excellency Mr. François Mitterrand included that problem in his four-point proposal. We should create an international mechanism whereby the additional proceeds of oil exporters would be transferred in part to those oil-importing countries which have suffered acutely as a result of the conflict.

(Mr. Skubiszewski, Poland)

Finally, I wish to say a few words about the changes in Central and Eastern Europe. The one-party system, with its unworkable, centrally planned - or rather misplanned - economy, has given way to parliamentary democracy and the market economy as two interconnected factors. Political freedom and economic reform cannot live without each other.

The resistance to totalitarianism in my country, as an expression of the longing for freedom, dignity and independence, led to the rise of the Solidarity trade union. The Solidarity trade union rejected the use of force, yet the movement for reform was victorious. The process thus started has now become irreversible, despite hardships inherent in the transition. Poles as a nation and Poland as a State have become sovereign again. We speak with our own voice and have taken our future back into our own hands.

The legacy of Yalta has thus been relegated to history. The once bipolar world is becoming a multipolar world where the notion of East and West is losing, at any rate politically, all relevance other than geographical relevance.

The transition to a market economy in Central and Eastern Europe is coupled with a structural readjustment. There should be a substantial reduction of debt, a comprehensive technical and capital aid package and improved access to markets. Such a programme might draw on the ideas of the Marshall Plan.

A year ago, after a long period of economic stagnation, Poland embarked upon the difficult road to a market economy, at the cost of unemployment, temporary recession and the ensuing decline in living standards. Primarily, the transition is our own responsibility. None the less, when the success of unprecedented evolution and peaceful change is at stake along with the stability of our part of Europe, external support may prove critical. As the political rift in Europe fades away, it would be an all too great mistake to allow economic divisions to be consolidated.

(Mr. Skubiszewski, Poland)

Mr. President, a few days ago in a newspaper interview you rightly said that previously, political ideologies had wrecked the functioning of the Organization. We are now, I hope, entering an era in which ideologies will be less and less vocal in international politics and in which the role of the ideological factor in relations among States will be greatly reduced and will disappear. We welcome that development. It should enhance the significance of international morality. Her Excellency Mrs. Danielle de St. Jorre just referred, very pertinently, to morality. The presence of morality will, I am sure, prove to be the strongest stabilizing element at a time when the United Nations has become more credible.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.